

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 SAA-01 SSM-03 SES-02 IO-13
CIAE-00 NSAE-00 NSCE-00 SSO-00 ICAE-00 INRE-00
A-01 AID-05 CCO-00 HA-05 OC-06 OMB-01 OPR-02
CA-01 MCT-02 SCS-06 SY-05 PM-05 H-01 INR-10 L-03
PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 TRSE-00 ACDA-12 /125 W
-----119952 071158Z /46

O P 071104Z AUG 78
FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9097
INFO SIT-REP COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GER
USNMR SHAPE BELGIUM
CINCUSNAVEUR, LONDON ENG
CINCUSAFE RAMSTEIN AB GER
COMSIXTHFLT
CTF SIX ZERO
CTF SIX ONE
CTF SIX TWO
CTG SIX ZERO PT TWO
FICEURLANT NORFOLK VA
FOSIF ROTA SPAIN
DIA WASHDC
CINCUSAREUR HEIDELBERG GER
USDOCOSOUTH NAPLES IT

C O N F I D E N T I A L BEIRUT 4505

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINS PINT MILI ASEC LE
SUBJ: LEBANESE SITUATION: AUGUST 7, 1978 - 1300 HOURS LOCAL

REF: BEIRUT 4477 (DTG 041338Z AUG 78)

1. SUMMARY: THE SYRIANS POUNDED THE EAST BEIRUT AREA WITH
MORTARS, HEAVY ARTILLERY AND ROCKET FIRE THE NIGHTS OF AUGUST
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5-6 AND AUGUST 6-7. THROUGHOUT THE NIGHT OF AUGUST 6-7, THERE
WAS ALSO INTERMITTENT SHELLING OF THE CORNICHE MAZRAA AREA OF
WEST BEIRUT, PRESUMABLY BY CHRISTIAN MILITIAMEN. THE LEBANESE
ARMY BATTALION REMAINS STUCK IN KAWKABA. FOREIGN MINISTER
BOUTROS AND PRIME MINISTER SALIM AL HOSS HAVE POSTPONED THEIR
SCHEDULED VISIT TO DAMASCUS (IF IN FACT THEY HAD PLANNED TO GO),
AS ANOTHER MAJOR POLITICAL CRISIS LOOMS. END SUMMARY.

2. SYRIANS SHELL BEIRUT.

A. SYRIANS POUNDED THE EAST BEIRUT AREA WITH ARTILLERY, MORTAR AND ROCKET FIRE SATURDAY AND SUNDAY NIGHTS. L'ORIENT LE JOUR ON AUGUST 7 ASKED: "WHERE IS THIS INTERMINABLE TORMENT (CALVAIRE) LEADING? IF THE ANSWERS WERE CLEAR, AT LEAST THE LEBANESE WOULD KNOW WHY THEY MUST DIE IN BEIRUT."

B. ACCORDING TO THE UNIFIED COMMAND OF THE CHRISTIAN MILITIAS, THREE PEOPLE WERE KILLED AND 26 WOUNDED THE FIRST NIGHT, WHILE L'ORIENT LE JOUR REPORTED ABOUT 10 PEOPLE KILLED AND 50 WOUNDED THE SECOND NIGHT. BOTH THE UNIFIED COMMAND AND L'ORIENT LE JOUR ACCUSED THE SYRIANS OF USING PHOSPHORUS SHELLS FOR THE FIRST TIME. RIGHTIST LE REVEIL CLAIMED 4,000 SHELLS OF ALL TYPES HIT EAST BEIRUT ON SUNDAY NIGHT ALONE. (THIS FIGURE IS DOUBTLESS EXAGGERATED.)

C. THE SYRIAN SHELLING SILENCED THE PHALANGIST VOICE OF LEBANON FOR SEVERAL HOURS ON AUGUST 6. (A NEW RADIO STATION OF THE UNIFIED COMMAND BEGAN TO BROADCAST FROM THE KESROUAN ON 1550 KHZ THE SAME DAY.) JUST BEFORE GOING OFF THE AIR, THE VOICE OF LEBANON ADDRESSED AN OPEN LETTER FROM THE INHABITANTS OF ASHRAFIYAH TO PRESIDENT SARKIS WHICH SAID: "GIVE YOUR ORDERS FOR THE CEASEFIRE SO THAT WE CAN FLEE, IF THE LAWFUL POWERS INSIST THAT WE LEAVE; OR IF THEY WANT US TO STAY, ALLOW US AT LEAST TO BUY FOOD AND MEDICINES . . ."

D. ADF STATEMENTS ON AUGUST 5 AND 6 EMPHASIZED THAT THE SYRIAN FORCES HAD OPENED FIRE ONLY IN RESPONSE TO CONTINUED FIRING BY CONFIDENTIAL

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CHRISTIAN MILITIAMEN AT SYRIAN POSITIONS.

3. WEST BEIRUT HIT.

THROUGH THE NIGHT OF AUGUST 6-7, WHILE THE SYRIANS FIRED, THERE WAS INTERMITTENT SHELLING OF THE CORNICHE MAZRAA AREA OF WEST BEIRUT. THERE HAS BEEN OCCASIONAL SHELLING OF THIS AREA SINCE AUGUST 1 (SEE PREVIOUS SITREPS). ALTHOUGH WE DO NOT YET HAVE FIRM EVIDENCE, IT SEEMS INCREASINGLY LIKELY THAT CHRISTIANS IN EAST BEIRUT ARE RESPONSIBLE. DANY CHAMOUN, ALTHOUGH DENYING THAT NLP MILITIAMEN WERE FIRING ON WEST BEIRUT, SAID THAT PHALANGE MILITIAMEN WERE. COLONEL SAMI KHATIB, NOMINAL COMMANDER OF THE ADF, TOLD THE AMBASSADOR THE FIRING WAS COMING FROM EAST BEIRUT.

4. BATTALION STILL STUCK IN KAWKABA.

THE LEBANESE ARMY BATTALION REMAINS STUCK IN KAWKABA, AND ON AUGUST 6 LEBANESE ARMY SOURCES IN BEIRUT DENIED AN ISRAELI RADIO REPORT THAT CHRISTIAN MILITIA LEADER SA'AD HADDAD HAD AGREED TO ALLOW THE BATTALION TO PROCEED TO TIBNIN. L'ORIENT-LE JOUR REPORTED, HOWEVER, THAT "TRAVELERS FROM THE REGION" HAD SEEN CHRISTIAN MILITIAMEN CLEARING MINES BLOCKING THE ROAD TO TIBNIN ON AUGUST 6. THE CEASE-FIRE IN EFFECT SINCE AUGUST 4 IS GENERALLY HOLDING, ACCORDING TO A UNIFIL SOURCE, ALTHOUGH THERE WAS

SOME SHELLING AUGUST 6 NEAR THE HASBANI BRIDGE, ACCORDING TO
L'ORIENT LE JOUR.

5. POLITICAL CRISIS.

THE SHELLING IN BEIRUT AND THE HALT OF THE LEBANESE BATTALION
AT KAWKABA THREATEN LEBANON WITH ANOTHER MAJOR POLITICAL CRISIS.
FOREIGN MINISTER BOUTROS AND PRIME MINISTER SALIM AL-HOSS HAVE
POSTPONED THEIR VISIT TO DAMASCUS REPORTEDLY SCHEDULED FOR THIS
WEEK, WHILE PRESIDENT SARKIS HAS MAINTAINED HIS TRADITIONAL
BUDDHA-LIKE SILENCE. IF SOME PROGRESS IS NOT MADE IN BEIRUT OR
KAWKABA, HOWEVER, PRESIDENT SARKIS MAY WELL HAVE TO LEAVE OFFICE.
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